

Canada's Community Inclusion Initiative 2010



50 years

Canadian
Association for
Community Living

Creating sustainable, inclusive
and diverse communities for all



Diversity includes.

The national Community Inclusion Initiative is a partnership between the Canadian Association for Community Living, People First of Canada and Provincial / Territorial Associations for Community Living, made possible through the financial support of the Government of Canada.

The purpose of the initiative is to promote the inclusion, full participation and citizenship of Canadians with intellectual disabilities and their families. Its goal is to *‘assist communities to develop the capacities they require to successfully include people with intellectual disabilities in ways that promote their roles as full citizens; to assist communities in becoming more welcoming and supportive of people with intellectual disabilities; in becoming places where people in all their diversity belong.’*

The initiative is focused on affecting needed changes in policies and practices across community sectors, bringing innovation to these sectors through a process of changing values, policies, and/or practices at municipal, regional, and provincial/territorial levels so that the full inclusion of all people is strengthened.

The CI initiative, while focusing on policy and practice change, remains centered on community and on individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. The project ensures that they are fully, actively and centrally engaged in the process of informing and influencing practice and policy. Since its inception, the project has enhanced the lives of thousands of individuals and families in communities, large and small, throughout this country.

Read on to learn more about its impact in your province or territory...

NOVA SCOTIA

Our efforts at systems change in Nova Scotia continue to focus on family and disability supports and deinstitutionalization. We are building on the foundations, lessons learned and successes achieved over the past years. These include a volunteer network trained and available to facilitate person centered planning through PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope); a partnership with a school board to undertake transition planning; the enhanced awareness of employers in building Employer Capacity; a community model for a sustainable, accessible transportation system; and forums on deinstitutionalization.

The next phase of our project will facilitate the development of family networks throughout the province, particularly in more rural areas. We are also creating community and government support for a shift from a service system that relies on an institutional model to one that provides increased choices and options in the community. Recent increases in admissions to institutions in Nova Scotia, disclosures of extensive abuses in these facilities, and a long history of reliance on institutional facilities are trends that must be stopped. We are now conducting efforts to bring about real and substantive changes to this area. These efforts will assist in the development of policy which will more appropriately support citizens of Nova Scotia with an intellectual disability. Identification of the actual numbers of individuals living in institutions is being undertaken and will inform a strategy to plan for the supports and resources needed by those individuals to live in community.



We are developing family networks in various regions to increase awareness among families of the type and extent of supports and services available in their communities. Tools and resources are being developed that can be used by families in determining what resources and supports are best suited to their needs. We are working to strengthen existing partnerships and identifying new partners to engage in a move towards a fully inclusive Nova Scotia.

A number of community forums, information sessions for universities, community colleges, Early Intervention Centers and family support groups will be organized over the next two and a half years. These will increase awareness and understanding of the issue of deinstitutionalization. Examples of best practices and supportive policy in inclusive community living and supports will be presented. People First of Nova Scotia and other community partners will contribute to the presentations, panel discussions, and identification of next steps for each area. 'Community Champions' will be identified to assist in advancing the move toward full inclusion in each of the areas and across Nova Scotia. The 'Champions' will partner with People First of Nova Scotia and NSACL in hosting a provincial forum and in advancing understanding and support within the Nova Scotia government, at both a political and bureaucratic level. We will also continue to collaborate with community groups to work toward the full inclusion of all people with disabilities in Nova Scotia.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

The British Columbia Association for Community Living's 'Pathways to Citizenship' project was born out of a commitment to build stronger and more inclusive communities for people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Our priorities include supporting family leadership, employment and disability supports and inclusive education with a vision of creating systemic change at all levels in community. Our capacity to make change with these areas has also provided opportunities to build organizational growth and development.

We have created new and sustained partnerships with diverse stakeholder groups including educators and their professional organizations, employment networks, universities and community colleges, business and municipal leaders, families, youth, other disability and community organizations and coalitions and networks and government. The leadership and participation of individuals with intellectual disabilities, families and our members from across BC ensures that we are grounded and accountable. The ripple effect of this community development work demonstrates the critical contribution that our funding from HRSDC makes.

Pathways to Citizenship also supports our work nationally allowing us to connect with ACL's across Canada to share and learn from their work. This networking has facilitated important learning across Canada and adds value to our initiatives here in BC — bringing new ideas and best practices to our work.



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SASKATCHEWAN

In Saskatchewan a new and powerful partnership has emerged between the disability community and the Government of Saskatchewan. Over the past three years, 35 disability advocacy organizations have come together to speak as one voice. These groups asked the government to create a separate, adequate income system for people with disabilities. DISC, the Disability Income Support Coalition, also asked that its members be included in the design of a new income program, believing that “no one can create a better system alone”.



The government responded by inviting an equal number of community and government representatives to work together on the design of the new program. The 50 recommendations made by the joint task team now form the basis for SAID, the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability, which was launched in the fall of 2009. When fully operational, SAID will provide an adequate income to people with disabilities in a manner that is respectful and supportive of the individual's goals. DISC members are continuing to support the ongoing development and implementation of SAID.

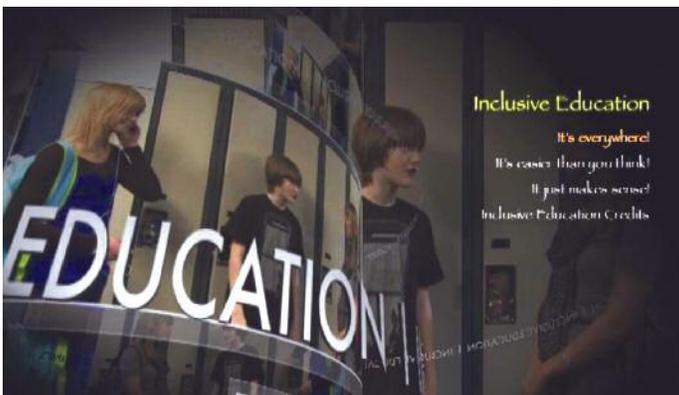
Our efforts to develop an option for supports and services built on individual strengths, goals and needs were augmented by extensive research. This research looked at questions of equity, sustainability, accountability, quality and risk management as well as labour market and staffing issues related to Self-Directed Funding. This project will support discussions within Saskatchewan and across Canada as many provinces look for more individualized alternatives to traditional services.

MANITOBA

In Manitoba our project focuses on two priorities: Family & Disability Supports and Inclusive Education. Both areas have in the past enabled us to create change in practices, policy, and attitude within government and community. Our greatest success has come by partnering with others in child care, education, and training. This has occurred through information development and delivery of a variety of workshop sessions to those most directly impacted, including families, individuals, educators, agency staff, government staff, and community organizations.

Manitoba's objectives are to engage stakeholders in these two areas, to create learning and network opportunities, and to affect policy and practices. We will facilitate networking opportunities and activities, and collaboratively create products that address common concerns. We are collecting stories to produce 'Community Living—The Next Generation'. We will script and perform three short plays highlighting issues related to the Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act. Work on transition protocols in education, Inclusive

Education Summits, Parent Leadership Development Weekends, and ongoing workshops, along with regular outreach and community engagement are other examples of future events.



Many of our publications/products are now being used as resource materials in colleges and universities. Our challenge always is to expand our connections, broaden our collaborations, and strengthen our engagement with stakeholders. Community Inclusion funding still offers the widest ability to accomplish our goals and successfully fulfill visions of better possibilities, for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Our community Inclusion Initiative has worked to foster change in two key areas: inclusive education at the high school level and transition from high school to employment for youth with an intellectual disability.

Fostering change to promote inclusive high schools has involved a number of strategies. One main strategy has involved developing and testing ‘site based training’ for high school educators. This has involved partnerships with three school districts and 11 schools. A three-year contract has enabled the mentoring and training to go into much more detail than in previous years. Schools are able to plan on a three year basis and get to pick what direction they want to take with our consultant. Results from the project are showing clear benefits for educators and schools. The site based approach is allowing teachers to learn about inclusive strategies that increase their ability to teach in diverse classrooms. The project has also provided effective training to paraprofessionals to support their role as inclusion facilitators within their schools.



NBACL is also in the process of developing a reflection tool on inclusive education practices based on the Ontario version of ‘An Inclusive School Culture’. This tool will soon be tested with the administration teams and teachers in three schools in one school district, one at the elementary level, one at the middle level and another at the high school level.

The work on transition to employment is testing a model of independent planning facilitation to inform future systems change in this area. Early evidence suggests that the independent planning facilitation approach has great promise for providing the kind of support that youth require in order to gain access to the workforce after high school. The project is also exploring ways to improve co-operative education work experience programs so that youth with an intellectual disability have valuable inclusive work experiences as part of their high school program. This is being linked to fostering summer employment opportunities for youth and determining how such opportunities help to strengthen the planning process and to prepare youth for employment after they finish high school. This aspect of the project has involved two school districts, five high schools, community partners, students and families.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

‘Meaningful and Active Partnerships’ is at the core of our Community Inclusion Initiative. Building on the results of extensive focus groups with individuals and their families, we are working closely with our partners to build inclusive communities. One of the key messages from teachers and parents is the need for effective teaching strategies to enhance inclusion in our schools. We are working with the Department of Education to provide professional development to 150 school leaders. The primary intent of the professional development is to provide practical strategies to make classrooms more inclusive for students with intellectual disabilities. This partnership allows us to help them proceed with the adopted recommendations from the ISSP/Pathways Commission report. With our support the Department of Education has rolled out an Inclusion Pilot



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Project which focuses on all aspects of inclusion for 30 school communities. We are continuing to partner on professional development for teachers through workshops on Differentiated Instruction and co-teaching, which have been identified as concrete strategies for inclusive education

Students with intellectual disabilities and their parents have expressed a need for students to more fully explore post school options. In response, we developed 'Students Exploring Through (SET) Mentoring', which is an in-school opportunity to involve students who face barriers and help them explore future career, community, and post school options. This is achieved through meaningful and active partnerships with NLACL, the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Employment Corporations, Nova Central School District and participating schools.

Individuals and families continue to express their concern about planning for the future. We are committed to improving the quality of life for the families we represent and we are achieving this by educating families about the Registered Disability Savings Plan. Families now have a sense of security when planning for the future, which will enable their sons and daughters to participate in all aspects of community life.

QUEBEC

In Quebec, our inclusion project entitled 'AGIR ENSEMBLE' creates action and partnership. It is innovative because it takes into account all the stages of life from infancy to adulthood, the development of well prepared transition plans, access to a secure home and the creation of a social network through adulthood.

Since June 2009, we have focused on two major areas: Housing and Transition Plans. Our goals include the creation of new and secure housing models which favour the autonomy of persons with developmental disabilities, taking into account the family, the society, the law and the demography; and enabling a smooth and coordinated transition from infancy to working life through the different stages of life (nursery, school, social life, housing, labour market).



In the area of Housing, we have created a directory that provides information on different housing models as a way of assisting parents to make a good choice, according to their child's characteristics and preferences. For each of the twelve presented models, steps of creation, different for each of them, are clearly identified. The support mechanisms and the financing linked to the housing are also listed. It is possible to add new partners according to the models and the regions.

To date, 11 groups of parents, social workers and partners have met. Despite problems encountered during the project, such as the building plan or the negotiation of services agreements with the health and social services network, the experience has been

positive. In most of the suggested models, parents are part of the management and decision making process. On the other part, thanks to services provided in their home, many persons with developmental disabilities have increased their autonomy and live like every citizen in their community.

The introduction of a formal transition planning process isn't usual in the province of Quebec. Nevertheless, persons with developmental disabilities, like everyone, face changes throughout their lifetime. Often times these changes represent great challenges, especially if the transition isn't well planned or does not take into account all aspects of the person.

As part of our community inclusion project we undertook a closer examination of the issues related to Transitional Planning for persons with developmental disabilities. In November 2009 we organized and hosted

a symposium called 'Une démarche à orchestrer pour des transitions harmonieuses'. This symposium was held in partnership with les ministères de l'Éducation, du loisir et du sport (MELS), de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS), de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MESS), de la Famille et des aînés (MFA), l'Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ) et le Mouvement Personne d'abord du Québec métropolitain (MPd'AQM). There were 250 participants including persons with developmental disabilities and families from many different regions of the province. Our project provided financial support to persons with developmental disabilities and parents to allow their attendance. Our future actions will take into account the shared experiences and the recommendations from the symposium.

The key to success in our ongoing efforts toward increasing the inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities in community lies in our ability to create and sustain a shared partnership. Our project has confirmed the value of working together and it is through this working together that we will both pursue and achieve our goals.

ONTARIO

Our community inclusion initiative carries on with a vision of robust and inclusive communities. As we look to the future in Ontario we recognize the importance of building strong networks of social capital and engaging youth, families and people who have an intellectual disability. One of our priorities is to build and further develop leadership capacity in these future leaders and change agents who will make inclusion a way of life in communities across the province.

Community Living Ontario partnered with the Youth Action Network of Ontario to host a three-day conference. Close to 100 young people from across Ontario, with and without disabilities, came together to talk about the issue of inclusion. They attended workshops developing their skills in communication, action planning, leadership and advocacy.

Participants said the biggest impact was hearing the stories of their peers who have an intellectual disability and their school experiences. Many youth at the forum said they did not realize that their peers were feeling excluded. As people who are often labeled as 'special', the students did not realize their peers did not feel special. Indeed it was a surprise to realize what they felt was isolation and rejection.

At the end of the conference one student finished up the weekend by saying; "Wow — I get it now — Special isn't a good thing if it keeps us separated from one another. We should spread the word about what is really going on." At the closing of the conference, each student signed a commitment card promising to bring back to their communities and their schools what they had learned about the importance of real inclusion.

Over the next three years, momentum of this initiative will continue to grow through a web based forum, Re:Action4Inclusion, and organizing community events. Students have engaged and supported each other in their efforts through the sharing of stories and successes about how they are changing their schools and communities to become more inclusive.

Ontario's Community Inclusion Initiative, together with a number of youth from this past conference and the Youth Action Network, will conduct a youth leadership series to continue encouraging young people to be active in achieving inclusion within their schools and communities across the province.



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ALBERTA

Our partnership with the Multi-Cultural Health Brokers Cooperative (MCHBC) and the Edmonton Child and Family Services Regional Authority continues. The MCHBC is comprised of multi-lingual, multicultural community development workers who are community leaders in their respective ethnic communities. The MCHBC Cooperative is committed to assisting refugee and immigrant populations to be included in Canadian society while retaining their cultural identities.

The Edmonton Child and Family Services Regional Authority is responsible for providing funding and support to families who have children with disabilities. The Authority recognizes that immigrant and refugee families have not always had ready access to resources and are committed to developing processes more responsive to immigrant and refugee families.

The Brokers continue to identify a significant number of families and individuals with developmental and other disabilities who are in need of assistance and support to navigate the human service system and pursue a more inclusive life. AACL works with the Brokers and families to negotiate needed supports, pursue inclusive schooling, and connect to other families. We continue to work across all of the immigrant and refugee communities and have expanded to ensure the Partnership is accessible to adults with developmental disabilities.

AACL staff continue to receive multicultural competency training, deepen our working relationships with the different communities and their brokers, provide advocacy expertise to families and the Brokers, and support the development of specific cultural family groups. More recently, we have begun to welcome immigrant and refugee families from the Partnership into AACL activities, such as, presenting at the Family Conference, and participating in the Leadership Series and Family Voices Network. More multi-cultural families are now integral to AACL and through their participation provide inspirational leadership.



Our Inclusive Education Initiative is reflective of efforts to further advance inclusive education in Alberta across many fronts. Our Inclusive Education Consultant provides training events for parents, teachers, schools and school districts across Alberta. Parents, educators and administrators continue to identify a need for increased knowledge with respect to the practice of inclusive education, including strategies for modifying curriculum and adapting instruction. Schools and school districts appreciate having training events held in their communities and tailored to their respective needs. Topics range from instructional and curricular issues to the role of the teaching assistant in the classroom.

Through the initiative we offer consultation to schools, teachers and families on improving the quality of inclusive education being offered. The consultant works directly with teachers in their classrooms to assist them in modifying curriculum and adapting instruction. The response from schools and teachers has been overwhelmingly positive. We are, as well, sustaining our working groups on inclusive education with various school districts, participating in consultations on the future of education in Alberta and will be hosting future events on inclusive education at our annual Family Conference and Summer Institute on Inclusive Education.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The overall purpose of the Community Inclusion Initiative in the Northwest Territories is to undertake activities which focus on social innovation and change in community policies and practices to advance the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. We are focusing on two key priorities towards this end: Inclusive Education and Family and Disability Supports.

In the area of Inclusive Education, building on previous activities and partnerships, we are partnering with local school districts to host our second 'Transitions Service Fair'. Similar to a trades fair, community organizations and government departments set up display tables and have representatives on hand to provide important information and resources that students require as they prepare to move from high school to community. Also within this priority area, we are partnering with the NWT Teacher's Association to provide their membership with the information and resources needed to foster inclusive classrooms and schools. In addition, we are supporting families of pre-school and high school aged children with disabilities to review and enhance the Government of the North West Territories (GNWT) policies with respect to accessing pre-school supports and post secondary Student Assistance Funds.



Within our Family and Disability Supports priority area, we are continuing to work with a multitude of partners in order to increase supports and services to people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Activities include the monitoring of the current NWT Disability Action Plan and creation of an updated plan; bringing community services together in a comprehensive, flexible, integrated, and seamless way through the creation of a Child and Family Community Resource Centre; and the implementation of regional respite support across the Territory.

Our Community Inclusion Initiative has initiated a pilot Family Networking Group. This group meets once a month to allow families an opportunity to get together to network, share experiences and stories, build their social network, and learn from each other. Guest speakers are often invited to come to share their expertise about issues relevant to families, and social events are hosted regularly. As one mom said, "It's great to talk with other parents / caregivers about what we're all going through — the mutual support is very valuable. I felt quite isolated before I started attending the group — I was the only person I knew who was dealing with supporting a family member with special needs. I really enjoy having this opportunity to connect with a community of people facing the same challenges."

YUKON

The Yukon CI project continues efforts within the area of the Performing Arts and we are positioning our efforts so that they are ultimately sustained and expanded by a community organization independent of the Community Inclusion Initiative. Ynklude, an inclusive group of artists with and without disabilities has wowed Yukon audiences for the last three years with their inspired, moving, and original works of performance and visual arts. Participants have evolved from being audience members to being taken seriously as writers, visual and performing artists. We have made our mark on the territory's art and performance world, both by supporting arts organizations to consider inclusive practices, as well as our own creative output of shows and performances.



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We have been busy creating new work, exploring new areas, and breaking old boundaries with our art. In 2009 we staged two major productions: 'Tell Me More' — a full scale original stage/musical production (co-produced with Yukon's Gwaandak Theatre) and 'Books and Bodies and Belting Out Tunes' (in collaboration with Yukon Arts Center).

In the Fall of 2009 we co-hosted (with Autism Yukon) a three-day symposium entitled 'I Have a Life Of My Own' that explored medical, social, educational, financial and family life of individuals with intellectual disabilities and those who support them. This symposium was very well attended by both professionals and family members.

In addition to our work within the Performing Arts, and as a result of ongoing discussion and consultation with families and individuals and other community partners the issue of income (i.e. poverty) has emerged as a priority. Individuals and families have clearly told us that full inclusion, regardless of advances made in other areas, is not possible while the majority of persons with intellectual disabilities live at a level significantly below the poverty line. Our CI project now also includes direct efforts toward influencing positive policy and practice change in existing Territorial financial programs.

In all activities we work to strengthen existing partnerships and to identify and bring on board new partners so that the move toward a more fully inclusive Yukon will be advanced.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

PEI continues to address systemic issues in the areas of Inclusive Education, Deinstitutionalization and Family and Disability Supports as identified during the 2008 Provincial Disability Services Review consultations held across the province.

In the area of Inclusive Education our Education Partners will sustain the new Transition from School to Community model and delivery process across the province by reducing the barriers faced by youth with intellectual disabilities.

With the new model being utilized across the province, the new approach has identified minor growing pains. Issues such as the number of people who should be involved in the early stages of planning, how prepared, knowledgeable and supported families are to begin the planning process and who should be involved in the planning. The province now has four Transition from School to Community working groups across the province set to meet regularly to review plans for their specific communities and their families.

Our 'Partners for Change' group is working collaboratively with government to achieve a shared vision and core values to support and encourage a No New Admissions policy for persons with intellectual disabilities. Partners for Change will work with the newly formed Disability Action Council that resulted from the 2008 Provincial Disability Services Review. The Council is charged with reviewing Partners for Change's 'One Person at a Time' pilot project. This project will map and facilitate the deinstitutionalization of up to three individuals with intellectual disabilities who are currently inappropriately institutionalized in PEI. We will also work collaboratively with the federal and provincial government, non-governmental organizations and community to stop the institutionalization of persons with intellectual disabilities. We are working to create a system that provides and sustains quality programs, services and supports available to those with intellectual disabilities that is community based, safe, supported, inclusive and person centered.



Our project, reflective of our family grassroots foundation, also supports families through public awareness and social marketing campaigns at the national and provincial levels, facilitated group discussion on proactive future planning for their sons or daughters and research on how individuals ages 9 to their senior years navigate the system on Prince Edward Island.

NUNAVUT

In Nunavut, the Community Inclusion initiative is sponsored by The Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS), a non-profit group that advocates on behalf of persons with disabilities in Nunavut. The Society is the only agency representing the interests of persons with disabilities and promotes awareness of the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. Understanding and awareness of disability and associated issues of disability is not yet well developed in Nunavut. To address this, our activities will focus on the development and dissemination of information to Government departments, hamlet offices, health centres, schools, organizations, agencies, and businesses so as to increase awareness on disability issues in Nunavut. We have developed brochures and information kits in both Inuktitut and English. We will also be conducting various community events that will further highlight the needs and priorities of persons with disabilities and their families.



PEOPLE FIRST OF CANADA

Deinstitutionalization and raising public awareness around the issues that effect persons with disabilities continue to be priority areas for People First of Canada. We continue to use the tools in our toolkit to spread the message and influence attitudes across the country. This year we have added some important resources to the toolkit.

More and more, our members are not only the designers of the tools; they are fast becoming one of our best resources. Presenting sessions at national conferences, taking part in panel discussions, facilitating discussions around deinstitutionalization are only some of the work our members have done this year. As we see an increase in requests for public events, PF members are mentoring each other on the skills needed to present and facilitate. By training more members to be effective voices we have been able to reach more people with our message and we have had contacts from people all over the country and the world.



With the power of that reach and outreach, we have seen an increase this year for information on how groups can become People First chapters. In some provinces and territories we are seeing a revitalizing as groups are coming together and working together. It is truly our members who are spreading the message and doing a fantastic job at it.

Expansion has also occurred through the continued support of the Community Inclusion Initiative and our ability to increase our national staff. This in turn is helping People First of Canada to continue to design and develop more resources for members to use as they carry on and spread the message of inclusion.



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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

Our national Initiative remains fundamentally about transforming communities; about changing how community organizations and community systems think of disability and of persons with intellectual disabilities. Our focus remains one of assisting these community systems to see persons with intellectual disabilities as full and equal citizens and to ensure that the manner in which systems are designed and delivered does not in any way exclude or marginalize persons with intellectual disabilities or their families.



Our efforts continue to be focused on six priority areas: Family and Disability Supports, Deinstitutionalization, Education, Income and Employment, Housing, and Community Associational Life and Capacity. In each area, in collaboration with CI partners, work is undertaken to develop strategies that will address and ultimately remove barriers which prevent the full participation and inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities.

Resources available within the CI initiative, made possible through the financial support of the Government of Canada, enable CACL to bring together participants from across the country to exchange knowledge and best practices related to creating real and sustained systems change. Each year we host forums in all six areas that serve as a mechanism by which we learn from and share with each other, both our successes and challenges. In addition this year we hosted a two-day national conference on Poverty, and plan similar events on Inclusive Education and Family & Disability Supports.

The CI project enables CACL to actively promote and encourage development of strong family based leadership within our federation and the broader community living movement. It assisted in the creation of a national Family Leaders Network; a network of family members who will help bring increased relevance to our efforts and be instrumental in bringing innovation and new thinking to our federation. We also continue to maintain a strong partnership with People First of Canada, particularly as related to our joint deinstitutionalization efforts.

Since its inception the CI initiative has evolved and grown based on results achieved and lessons learned. An independent evaluation was conducted on the CI project and can be viewed at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/publications_resources/evaluation/index.shtml.

Collaboration and partnership within our federation and with community and government organizations have been key to our success in advancing real and sustained systems change. Change that is grounded in families and individuals with intellectual disabilities; change that will ultimately enable their full inclusion in all aspects of Canadian society.

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